

THE GOLDEN  
**50s**  
INDIA'S ENDANGERED CLASSICS



FILM HERITAGE  
FOUNDATION

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# The Golden 50s

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INDIA'S ENDANGERED CLASSICS

CURATED BY



FILM HERITAGE

FOUNDATION

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# Introduction

SHIVENDRA SINGH DUNGARPUR

I was a child of the '70s, but I lived and breathed the cinema of the 1950s. On summer evenings, my grandfather would bring his projector to the verandah and screen those wonderful prints for us: The magical dream sequence from Raj Kapoor's *Awara*, the poetic intensity of Guru Dutt's films, the iconic mother figure in Mehboob Khan's *Mother India*, and the universal truth captured in the stillness of Bimal Roy's narratives. To me, cinema was vibrant and breathing, and *Kaagaz ke*

*Phool* made me want to become a filmmaker.

India in the 1950s was a country newly born, freed from the shackles of colonialism, full of hopes and aspirations. It was a decade of great socio-economic change as a young democracy, guided by Nehruvian socialist ideals, aimed to fulfil its promise and write its own place in history. The country's Partition, as well as growing industrialization, made migration a way of life. The cities beckoned with dreams of opportunity and prosperity, but also revealed the grim reality of slums, crime and exploitation.

This was an age that saw the birth of a new breed of filmmakers who turned their backs on mythology and historical dramas to explore new themes of urbanization and migration. To these daring new subjects, they brought a sense of realism tempered with a deep romanticism. Narratives began to lean heavily towards social commentary, as the leftist artists and intellectuals of the Progressive Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association gravitated towards cinema, viewing it as a powerful evangelical medium. Italian neo-realist films found their way to Indian shores, and Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* struck a chord with Indian filmmakers, who discovered that the reality of the human struggle was a universal truth. Bimal Roy (1909-1966), Raj Kapoor (1924-1988), Guru Dutt (1925-1964), Mehboob Khan (1907-1964), S.S.

Vasan (1903-1969) and Ritwik Ghatak (1925-1976) were among the radical filmmakers who made the 1950s the most glorious chapter in the history of Indian cinema—truly its Golden Age.

It was difficult for me to choose just eight films from the three major film industries of that time—Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. But each of these eight films represents an innovation in thought, form or style. They show us how the filmmakers of the 50s began pushing the boundaries of technology to tell their stories. Black-and-white cinematography reached its artistic pinnacle, influenced by film noir. Colour came into its own, and the introduction of Cinemascope inspired filmmakers to evolve new forms of mise-en-scene.

The earliest film in the retrospective, *Chandrakanta* (1948), represents both a beginning and an end. S. S. Vasan began filming at Gemini Studios in Madras when the old studio system was crumbling, but the showman made an epic that was the first of its kind. Three years in the making, it was the most expensive film of the period, a forerunner for Bombay's big-budget spectaculars. *Awara* (1951) explored the social inequities of the fifties through an emotional, dramatic story, while marking the first signature appearance of Raj Kapoor's iconic character modelled on Charlie

Chaplin's Tramp. *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953), influenced by De Sica, was the first Indian film to be made in the neo-realist style, with Bimal Roy taking his camera out of the studio and into the streets of Calcutta. *Mother India* (1957), shot in Gevacolor and produced under a banner whose emblem was the hammer and sickle, embodied Nehru's socialist vision in its allegory of a new India. Guru Dutt's masterpieces *Pyaasa* (1957) and *Kaagaz ke Phool* (1959) are the work of a true auteur, revealing an intensely personal and poetic vision while exploring the angst of the artist in a materialistic world. Meanwhile, *Ajantrik* (1958) explores 'the very significant and inevitable relationship between the man and the machine' in Ritwik Ghatak's own words. Far away in Calcutta, the Bengali director was breaking all conventions to develop his own unique cinematic language, which was to have a deep impact on the parallel cinema movement of the 1970s.

In keeping with the tradition of the time, I have picked eight newsreels to precede each of the feature films. These newsreels, which are being screened for the first time outside India, were produced by the Government of India's Films Division. Set up in 1948, this was one of the largest bodies in the world producing and distributing documentaries and short films. Propaganda in part, the Films Division newsreels are nevertheless an important record of their time, showcasing rare vignettes of history like the meeting of Gandhi and Chaplin, Frank Capra's visit to Bombay, Lord Mountbatten's last day as Viceroy of India, and the Dalai Lama's arrival in India to begin a life in exile.

Screening these films is a reminder of a singular cinematic legacy, a rich and varied tradition. Today, however, this heritage is facing a severe threat. The classics shown here are in imminent danger of being lost to the world if urgent steps are not taken for their preservation and restoration.

Shivendra Singh Dungarpur is a filmmaker and the director of the documentary *Celluloid Man*. He is the Founder-Director of the Film Heritage Foundation, which was set up in 2014 with Shyam Benegal, Gulzar, Jaya Bachchan, P.K. Nair, Kumar Shahani, Girish Kasaravalli, Mark Cousins, Krzysztof Zanussi and Gianluca Farinelli as its advisors.

## Film Heritage Foundation

During the making of my film *Celluloid Man*, a tribute to a legendary Indian archivist, I discovered that India, which makes the largest number of films in the world and has recently celebrated a centenary of filmmaking, has few records of its cinematic history. I learned that while 1700 silent films were made in India, only five or six of these have survived in a complete form. The Madras film industry made 124 films and 38 documentaries in the silent era, but only one is available today. Tragically, we have even lost our first sound film *Alam Ara* (1931). As a result of widespread complacency, India had lost seventy to eighty per cent of its films by 1950.

On a personal note, it saddened me to see the fate of the images I had grown up watching: cans rusting in forgotten corners, reels sold for scrap, and stripped for silver. I found that I wanted to go beyond watching films to actually work towards preserving and restoring them. And so the idea for the Film Heritage Foundation was born.

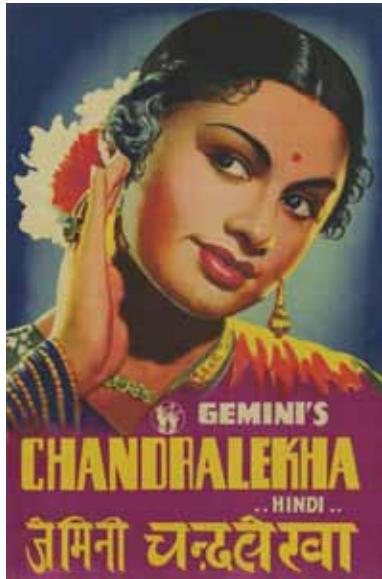
Through this foundation, we hope to make a beginning. Our primary focus is of course the conservation, preservation and restoration of the moving image. However, in a country with a rich cinematic past and an equally poor history, there is a strong need to create awareness about the language of cinema. Apart from the restoration of films, we have several other projects in the pipeline: a national campaign for film preservation and restoration; a pilot project in Indian schools introducing the use of film as an educational tool; and a week-long restoration school in Mumbai.

These initiatives, we hope, will create a wave of change. India's cinematic legacy has been neglected far too long. It's time we recognized it as a national treasure, one that must be saved and protected.

## Chandalekha

INDIA, 1948  
 DIRECTOR: S. S. VASAN  
 186 MINS. B&W; TAMIL  
 SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** S. S. VASAN **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** GEMINI STUDIOS  
**CAMERA:** KAMAL GHOSH **ART DIRECTOR:** A. K. SEKAR **EDITOR:** CHANDRU **STORY, SCREENPLAY & DIALOGUE:** GEMINI STORY DEPARTMENT (K.J. MAHADEVAN, SUBBU, SANGU, KITTOO, NAINA) **LYRICS:** PAPANASAM SIVAN, KOTHAMANGALAM SUBBU **MUSIC:** S. RAJESHWARA RAO **BACKGROUND SCORE:** M.D. PARTHASARATHY, R. VAIDYANATHAN, B. DAS GUPTA **CAST:** T. R. RAJAKUMARI, M. K. RADHA, RANJAN, SUNDARIBAI, N. S. KRISHNAN, T. A. MATHURAM, L. NARAYANA RAO, V. N. JANAKI, T. E. KRISHNAMACHARIAR, SUBBIAH PILLAI.



Filmed originally in Tamil and later in Hindi, *Chandalekha* was in its time the most expensive film made in India. Directed by showman S. S. Vasan, the owner of Chennai's Gemini Studios, the film brought the scale and vision of the Hollywood spectacular to indigenous themes, creating a nationwide hit that still features in every list of landmark Indian films. It was hugely influential, setting production and publicity standards for the Bombay blockbuster. A robust Ruritanian swashbuckler at heart, the plot centres on the young princes Veerasimhan and Sasankan, rivals for the throne and the affections of the beautiful Chandalekha. A series of events leads to Sasakan usurping the kingdom, which forces Veerasimhan and Chandalekha into hiding. The narrative weaves in episodes featuring circus acts and acrobatic stunts, as the fugitive couple joins a troupe of itinerant performers. Eventually, Sasakan captures Chandalekha and forces her to marry him, leading to the film's legendary climactic 'dance of the drums' sequence, in which Veerasimhan's men burst out of scores of giant drums to overwhelm their enemy.

### India's First Spectacular

UMA VANGAL ON S. S. VASAN'S *CHANDALEKHA*

Reading *Chandalekha*'s success in retrospect, one realizes that several factors would have contributed to its positive reception. In 1948, the first year of India's independence from colonial rule, the film's primary conflict—the struggle between the usurper and the rightful heir—would have resonated strongly with the Indian audience, leading them to register all the nuanced allusions and metaphors embodied in the film. They would have seen the demonized villain as a personification of the cruel colonial power which had usurped the land, with Veerasimhan's struggle

and imprisonment evoking the freedom struggle and the harsh treatment meted out to the leaders of the nationalist movement. The joyous celebrations at his release and ascension to power would have surely reflected the mood of the newly independent nation.

On the surface, *Chandalekha* is an incredible extravaganza with a great story and setting. In the darkened cinema hall, however, it goes beyond mere entertainment to create an intense engagement with its audience, through its references to popular notions of valour and courage, and characters who try to



live up to an heroic and moral ideal. In this context, it is interesting to note the central female character and her pivotal role in restoring the status quo. It is also worth noting that Tamil films of the period always portrayed women as strong, independent and holding their own in a patriarchal society, challenging norms and the restrictions imposed upon them—a case in point would be the female protagonists of Ellis R. Dungan's Tamil films. *Chandalekha*, named after its heroine, portrays a world where men and women work together to establish a rightful rule. Perhaps this reflects the filmmaker's vision of a truly democratic nation, based on equal rights for men and women.

*Chandalekha* marks a transition for the Tamil audience, which was moving on from its staple fare, the 'mythological' film, dealing with stories from Indian myth and legend. It also represents a change for filmmakers who were attempting to use their democratic medium to bring contemporary themes to the audience. Costume dramas like *Chandalekha*, dealing with struggles for power, eventually led

the audience to accept 'socials' (films about contemporary issues in modern-day settings). The film also established many of the conventions that are associated today with Indian cinema—the spectacular song-and-dance sequences, colourful costumes, and elaborate sets which are considered typical of Bollywood, but in actuality emerged from the South Indian film industry. A formula for entertaining blockbusters was made concrete with *Chandalekha*, which ultimately led viewers to expect every film to feature a variety of elements such as music, dance, thrilling stunts, action sequences, fantastic locales, intrigue, heroism, and emotional journeys with enough plot twists and turns to keep them engaged for over three hours of screen time. This was the true achievement of *Chandalekha*—the creation of a template for mainstream Indian cinema, a model for future filmmakers to emulate and reap benefits at home and abroad.

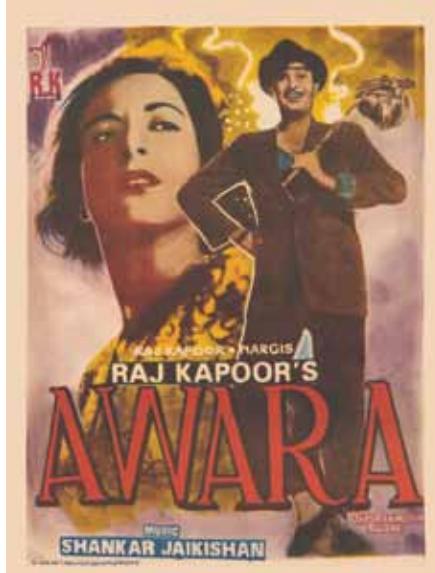
Uma Vangal is a film scholar who teaches at the L. V. Prasad Film & Television Academy, Chennai.

## Awara

aka *The Vagabond*

INDIA, 1951  
DIRECTOR: RAJ KAPOOR  
168 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

PRODUCER: RAJ KAPOOR PRODUCTION COMPANY: R. K. FILMS  
CAMERA: RADHU KARMAKAR ART DIRECTOR: M. R. ACHREKAR  
EDITOR: G. G. MAYEKAR STORY: K. A. ABBAS, V. P. SATHE DIALOGUE & SCREENPLAY: K. A. ABBAS LYRICS: HASRAT JAIPURI, SHAILENDRA MUSIC: SHANKAR-JAIKISHAN CAST: PRITHVIRAJ KAPOOR, NARGIS, RAJ KAPOOR, K. N. SINGH, SHASHI KAPOOR, CUCKOO, B. M. VYAS, LEELA MISRA, BABY ZUBEIDA, LEELA CHITNIS, HONEY O'BRIEN.



Indian cinema stepped out into the world with *Awara*, which captivated audiences not only in India, but in Soviet Russia, China, and the Arab countries as well. The hugely popular title song 'Awara hoon (I'm a vagabond)' represents a first outing for the character, loosely modelled on Charlie Chaplin's Tramp, that Raj Kapoor played in subsequent films. The film's plot, which has been described as an 'Oedipal melodrama', deals with a respectable judge who turns his pregnant wife out of his house, suspecting her of infidelity. Their son Raju grows up in the slums to become a rootless vagabond who lives by his wits. When he falls in love with the judge's ward Rita, Raju decides to reform and give up the criminal life. However, through various circumstances, he ends up facing a charge of murder, and is defended in court by Rita. The trial forces the judge to confront his own beliefs and actions, and acknowledge his culpability. Eventually, he embraces Raju as his son. Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's own father, played the judge, while the romance between Rita and Raju drew much of its heat from the real-life affair of the stars who played the characters.

## Turning Modern Mythology on Its Head

KUMAR SHAHANI ON RAJ KAPOOR'S AWARA

The apprehension of beauty senses both danger and desire.

The danger becomes the Chorus and desire becomes Oracular.

Of epic history is born peasant tragedy.

The redemption, of course, is in love.

It rises above the medieval arches of oppressive regimes, hewn in stone, alien to the nation. The heavy black tones weigh down upon all who see freedom. Outside is the real abode of the 'jungli'.

The fragrant lotus that embeds the feminine, also

brings forth the spirit of the wild Awara.

Thus the personal poetry of Raj Kapoor, vagabond-flâneur, surrounded by kitschy signals of heaven and hell, the mythical imperatives of mass communication, iconised both as rebel and dictator.

It was Charlie Chaplin who had exclaimed that Hitler had borrowed his moustache. Raj Kapoor too did his own make-overs, from the destitute aristocrat to the shark-skinned global player, displaying all the panache of a chameleon. He led his life in much the same way, hobnobbing with the cultural elite at



Irani cafes, inviting to his 'cottage' the most talented people of the world, raising money from the mafia without fear, showering the greatest affection upon the homeless and the poorest of the poor, yet living like a king.

The phenomenal success of both Chaplin and Raj Kapoor lies perhaps in the fact that both of them identified themselves with the disenfranchised, finding in them the truth and beauty of simplicity and innocence. They inverted the processes of identification that mainstream cinema manufactured to formula. Raj Kapoor was harassed by his distributors to fracture his own telos later on in life when he carried his autobiographical concerns into the wide sweep of history, just as Chaplin, in a manner, was exiled from the State that proclaimed the law of the Father.

The destiny of the patriarch seems to be the destruction of his beloved and their progeny, as it is of the state to annihilate its own people, equal in moral terms, unequal in every other. Raj Kapoor made his own father Prithviraj play this figure, an act of daring that no other Oedipus of our times may

have undertaken. He made the father apologize to all citizens of the world for the blind rule of Law, albeit to the wounded, shrouded mother in death's throes.

"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life..."

"I was a worshipper of nudity I think. It all started because of my intimacy with my mother who was young, beautiful, with sharp features... We often bathed together, and seeing her in the nude left a deep erotic impression on my mind."

The scenes of adolescent love in Raj Kapoor's films have all the innocence and freshness of first love, the first kiss, the first consummation, like an illumination, the discovery of the other that is the fountainhead of knowledge without guilt or remorse.

Perhaps therein lies the felicity of his address to every human heart, across the ideological divides, cultural differences and learned prejudices that hide our sacred nudity from ourselves and those whom we love.

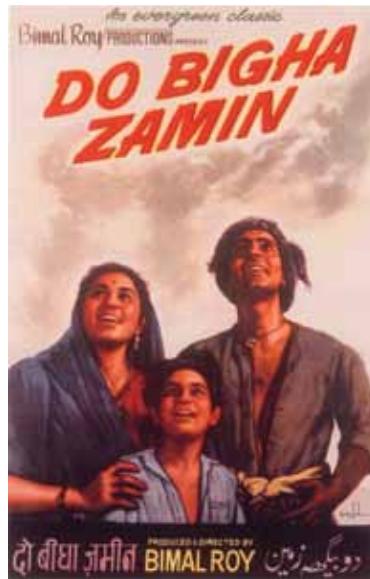
*Kumar Shahani is a noted filmmaker known for films like Maya Darpan (1972), Tarang (1984), Khayal Gatha (1988) and Kasba (1990).*

## Do Bigha Zameen

aka *Two Acres of Land*

INDIA, 1953  
DIRECTOR: BIMAL ROY  
122 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** BIMAL ROY **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** BIMAL ROY PRODUCTIONS **CAMERA:** KAMAL BOSE **ART DIRECTOR:** GONESH BASAK **EDITOR:** HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE **STORY:** SALIL CHOWDHURY **SCREENPLAY:** HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE **IALOGUE:** PAUL MAHENDRA **LYRICS:** SHAILENDRA **MUSIC:** SALIL CHOWDHURY **CAST:** BALRAJ SAHNI, NIRUPA ROY, RATAN KUMAR, MURAD, NANA PALSIKAR, NASIR HUSSAIN, RAJLAKSHMI, NOORJAHAN, NAZIR HUSSAIN, REKHA, MISHRA, CHITRA, JAGDEEP, TIWARI, MEENA KUMARI (SPECIAL APPEARANCE).



Originally a director in Bengali films, Bimal Roy brought the humanism and social concerns of his tradition to Hindi cinema. A screening of the neo-realist classic *Bicycle Thieves* at India's first International Film Festival inspired him to create *Do Bigha Zameen*, the grittily dramatic tale of a poor farmer's struggle to save his land from the clutches of a rapacious landlord. Given three months to pay off his debts, the farmer moves to the city, where he takes up work as a rickshaw-puller, while his son becomes a shoeshine boy. They find a home and friendship in the slums, but are also tested cruelly by the city. Battling setbacks with a deepening sense of despair, they race against time to raise the money, but fail in the task. Though the land is lost, and a factory stands where they once tilled the soil, we see that the family has survived their ordeal with dignity and moral values intact. Bimal Roy's direction has a simple, straightforward grace and emotional depth, while Balraj Sahni delivers a fine, restrained performance as the farmer Shambhu, heart-wrenching in passages like the film's famous rickshaw-race sequence. *Do Bigha Zameen* won its lead actor and its director several awards, besides featuring in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 1954, where it received a Prix International.

## The Ring of Truth

SAEED MIRZA ON BIMAL ROY'S *DO BIGHA ZAMEEN*

It was less than a decade after India gained independence from British rule that Bimal Roy's film *Do Bigha Zameen* was released. Audiences around the country greeted it with stunned silence. There was no boisterous acclaim, none of the celebratory music that follows the news of a film becoming a box-office success. It was an acknowledgement that a new kind of cinema had emerged. A cinema in the popular mode, with the ring of truth.

The film had bridged the gap between fiction and

reality. Yes, it was overly melodramatic at times, and yes, the story line did have avoidable coincidences. But somewhere in all of this, there was an incredible honesty that could not be ignored. The film had touched the core of a nation's dilemma, as it attempted to free itself from its feudal past and move towards a modern, industrial future.

The dilemma was about land. Eighty-five percent of the population lived in rural and semi-rural areas. Of this, the vast majority were small, marginal



farmers and landless labourers who worked on the fields of the big feudal landlords. In urban areas too, there was a large population of landless labourers who had escaped serfdom and migrated there in search of work.

This was the central idea of *Do Bigha Zameen*. It is the story of a marginal farmer who is given a short time of three months to pay back a debt, or forfeit his small piece of land. The film is about his battle to save the dignity and honour of his family. Bimal Roy slowly builds up the tension in the film, as the farmer and his young son move from their rural environs to the city of Kolkata in order to earn that crucial amount of money that can redeem their lives. The tension begins to mount as the farmer becomes a human carriage ferrying people across the city. As the deadline approaches, his son begins to work as a shoeshine boy and his pregnant wife also joins a village workforce.

The film now revolves around the family fighting frenziedly against the odds to save their land. In the midst of all of this, Bimal Roy also reveals the

underbelly of the city, where the poor congregate to live and work, and to make something of their lives. It is here that the viewer finds a camaraderie that celebrates the human spirit of compassion and understanding.

But Bimal Roy reveals he has other concerns on his mind. He had two choices on how to end the film: Would he allow the characters to emerge triumphant from their ordeal, or would he rather predict the course the country would take in the future? He chose the latter. That is why his film has the ring of truth even today.

The biggest debates raging across India today are around the very issues Bimal Roy raised in his film. Millions of marginal farmers are leaving their lands out of desperation and heading to towns and metropolises across the country. Some say it is the greatest mass migration of people in the world.

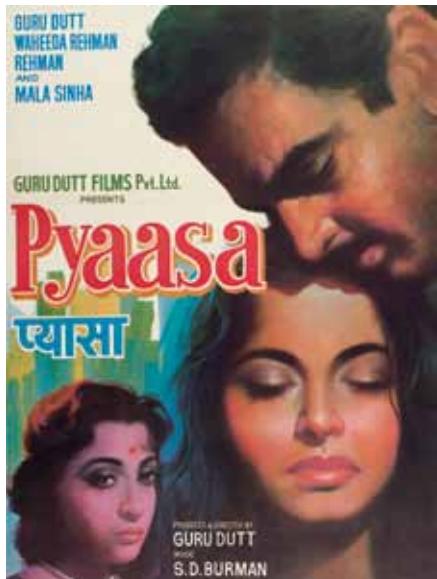
Saeed Mirza is a writer and director in Indian cinema and television. His films include *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho!* (1984), *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Ata Hai* (1980), and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989).

## Pyaasa

aka *Eternal Thirst / The Thirsty One*

INDIA, 1957  
DIRECTOR: GURU DUTT  
143 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

PRODUCER: GURU DUTT PRODUCTION COMPANY: GURU DUTT FILMS  
CAMERA: V. K. MURTHY ART DIRECTOR: BIREN NAAG EDITOR: Y. G. CHAWHAN DIALOGUE: ABRAR ALVI LYRICS: SAHIR LUDHIANVI MUSIC: S. D. BURMAN CAST: MALA SINHA, GURU DUTT, WAHEEDA REHMAN, REHMAN, JOHNNY WALKER, KUMKUM, LEELA MISRA, SHYAM, MEHMOD, RADHESHYAM, TUN TUN, MAYA DASS, MONI CHATTERJI, ASHTA.



Producer and director Guru Dutt's film is widely considered an unquestionable classic of Indian cinema, thanks to its intensely original and poetic vision. Dutt plays the central role of Vijay, the brooding, alienated poet who encounters greed and philistinism among the gatekeepers of society, and compassion in the world of the marginalized. Betrayed in love and rejected by his family, Vijay begins to live on the street, where the prostitute Gulabo falls in love with him. When a dead beggar to whom Vijay gave his coat is mistaken for the poet, Vijay is presumed dead. Gulabo has his poetry published and the book becomes a bestseller, leading those who had previously rejected Vijay to now gather and sing his praises. In the film's rousing climax, Vijay returns from the dead to denounce the hypocrisy of his corrupt exploiters, a condemnation that spirals into a blistering assault on all of society, calling for its violent destruction. *Pyaasa*'s depiction of the romantic artist and his rejection of an unfeeling, materialistic world struck a chord with Indian viewers. The film was a popular success in its time, and remains much loved today for its enduring poetry and music.

## Melody and Drama

ARUN KHOPKAR ON GURU DUTT'S PYAASA

*Pyaasa*, a film about the life of a poet, was a great commercial and critical success in the short life of its maker Guru Dutt. It deals with the struggle of an artist against his milieu, which insults and humiliates him during his lifetime, and glorifies him as an icon after his 'death', once his market value is recognised.

Guru Dutt worked in the genre of melodrama and was equally sensitive to its two components, melody and drama. Like Orson Welles, he had a vision of his protagonists which he interpreted masterfully, as the finely nuanced performances in *Pyaasa* prove. His

drama was based on understatement. Where other Indian filmmakers would use a scream, he used a whisper. His camera, quite often mounted on a crane with a 100 mm lens, would move silently into a close-up to capture minute changes of expression. The crane movements varied from swooping dramatic manoeuvres to subtle, almost imperceptible changes of level.

As for melody, no one used songs with more telling effect. In *Pyaasa*, Guru Dutt disregarded the conventions of Indian cinema regarding songs. He



could use them in fragmentary form or as an extension of dialogue, while at other times, they went beyond the standard length. He could use them dramatically, as in his powerful interpretation of the scene where a song plays over a hysterical, stampeding mob. No matter how he used a song, his complete mastery over its mise-en-scène and its rhythmic cutting expressed a wide range of emotions, from extreme gentleness, sensuousness and tenderness to dramatic conflict and brutal violence.

Working in close collaboration with his cameraman V. K. Murthy, Guru Dutt created a world of original and unique images. Though their style draws from a realistic idiom, it is not restricted by realism. Often, fleeting shadows thrown by unidentified sources cross the face of a character; reflections on a polished wooden surface lead to an interplay of images from the past and present; elongated shadows underline the loneliness of the protagonist. Lighting charges the spaces of everyday life with emotion.

The world created by Guru Dutt's imagination in *Pyaasa* is deeply humanistic and sympathetic to the people who live on the fringes of respectable society,

from the commercial sex worker to the itinerant masseur. These characters retain their humanism in spite of the difficult conditions of their lives. Their depiction has none of the maudlin sentimentality so common in Indian cinema. These people fight for what they believe is right. They support each other in difficult circumstances, without losing their joie de vivre. Guru Dutt's characterisation of the affluent and the powerful too is done with a fine eye for detail—he shows us the signs of their pomp, the arrogance of their gestures and words, and finally the brutality of their actions.

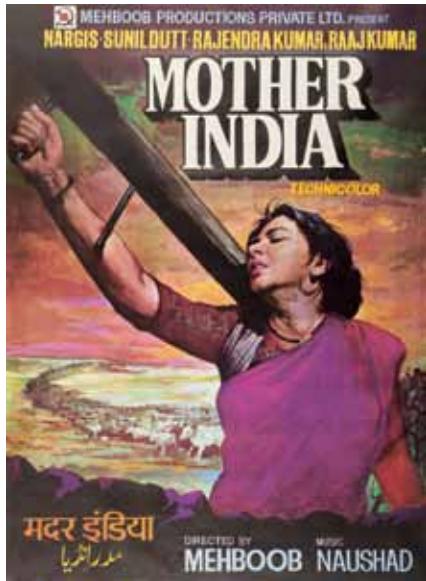
Perhaps it is the humanism of *Pyaasa* that still intrigues us and draws us in, after all these years. Guru Dutt's works invite us to understand others and understand ourselves. They are works with long lives, in a world where few films live on beyond the opening week. Their magnetic force still pulls us towards them. Their rich and velvety blacks, impeccable whites and subtle greys have lost none of their crispness. Their melody keeps on resonating within us.

Arun Khopkar is a filmmaker and scholar. He is the author of Guru Dutt: A Tragedy in Three Acts.

## Mother India

INDIA, 1957  
DIRECTOR: MEHBOOB KHAN  
172 MINS. COLOUR; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** MEHBOOB KHAN **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** MEHBOOB PRODUCTIONS **CAMERA:** FAREDON IRANI **ART DIRECTOR:** V. H. PALNITKAR **EDITOR:** SHAMSUDDIN KADRI **DIALOGUE:** WAJAHAT MIRZA, S. ALI RAZA **LYRICS:** SHAKEEL BADAYUNI **MUSIC:** NAUSHAD **CAST:** NARGIS, SUNIL DUTT, RAJ KUMAR, RAJENDRA KUMAR, KANHAIYALAL, MUKRI, JILLOO, KUMKUM, CHANCHAL, SHEELA NAIK, AZARA, MASTER SAJID, SITARA DEVI (SPECIAL APPEARANCE)



"All Hindi films come from *Mother India*", an Indian screenwriter once remarked. Exuberantly rich in incident and spectacle, director Mehboob Khan's sprawling melodrama has acquired the status of a national epic over the years. A remake of Khan's own *Aurat* (1940), the film unfolds the saga of a peasant woman (Nargis in an iconic performance), whose courage and determination symbolizes the endurance of the nation itself. The rural landscapes of India, the rhythms of village life and the changing seasons are brought alive by evocative colour cinematography in rich earth tones. The plot valorizes the self-sacrifice and virtuous morality of Radha, a village woman who loses her husband and has to raise her sons on her own, even as she struggles to pay off a crippling debt to the village moneylender. She loses a child to nature's depredations: of the surviving two, one grows up to be a dutiful son, while the other rebels against injustice to become a bandit. When he kidnaps the moneylender's daughter, the mother makes her ultimate sacrifice and preserves the honour of the village by shooting her own son down.

### The Epic Journey of a Nation

SAEED MIRZA ON MEHBOOB KHAN'S *MOTHER INDIA*

*Mother India* was made in 1957, exactly ten years after India gained Independence. Though the film begins a generation before that momentous occasion, strangely enough, it never actually reveals the face of the colonizing power. Rather, it delves into the rhythm of an agricultural civilization that has existed since time immemorial.

And representing this timelessness is Radha, played by Nargis, who combines the characteristics of both Mother Courage and Mother Earth. Through her, we traverse the epic journey of a country from

darkness to light.

Radha's story begins with her as a young bride who, along with her farmer husband, struggles to make ends meet. Theirs is a journey of a little happiness and much struggle and sorrow, since most of what their land produces is taken by the village landlord. When Radha and her husband try to fend for themselves by cultivating a piece of barren land, catastrophe strikes. The husband loses both his arms in an accident, and Radha has to pawn her jewellery to the landlord in order to fend for their three



children. Later, she will also lose her land to him.

Though at this point the film revolves around the theme of an unjust agrarian system, of land and the struggle to make it yield, other factors come into play. The disappearance of Radha's husband one day, because he cannot bear the humiliation of his incapacity; the death of Radha's youngest child in a flood. Through all this, we see the saga of Radha, and her indomitable spirit, as the years pass and her two young boys become men.

The only reference to India becoming a nation comes when Radha appeals to fellow villagers who are attempting to flee the ravages of a great flood, not to abandon their lands and to have faith that things will change. The villagers return, and in a symbolic shot, regroup into the contours of the map of India. The year is 1947 and India is free.

The saga now shifts to Radha's struggle on two fronts: one, to till the land with the help of her sons, and the other, more personal, to tame the rebellious spirit of her younger son who harbours deep anger against the scheming landlord who brought such grief

upon his family. In all of this, Radha maintains a stoic dignity that arises from the values ingrained within her. These are the values of a traditional India that has seen a series of destabilizing onslaughts, and yet has held fast and remained unchanged.

The film finally moves to a fiery climax where Radha has to confront a great dilemma: on one side, her love for her rebellious son who has turned into a brigand, and on the other, the honor and dignity of a young woman he has abducted. Though the young woman is related to the hated landlord, Radha knows where her priorities lie. She makes her choice, and it is heart-wrenching.

The film ends in independent India, where Radha is invited to inaugurate a small dam that will finally bring water to the parched fields. Hopefully, this is a new beginning that will change the lives of people who have been oppressed for long.

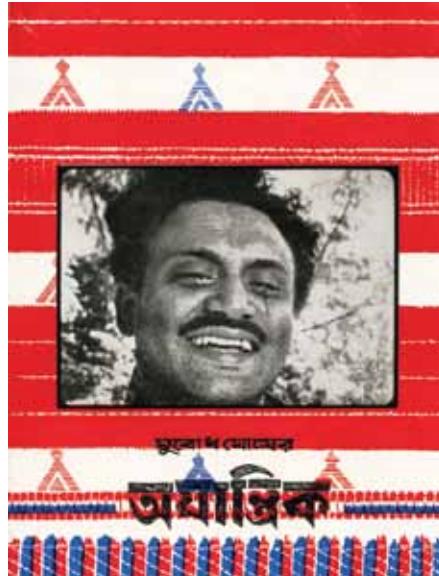
Saeed Mirza is a writer and director in Indian cinema and television. His films include *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho!* (1984), *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Ata Hai* (1980), and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989).

## Ajantrik

aka *Pathetic Fallacy*

INDIA, 1957  
DIRECTOR: RITWIK GHATAK  
102 MINS. B&W; BENGALI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** PROMODE LAHIRY **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** L. B. FILMS INTERNATIONAL **CAMERA:** DINEN GUPTA **ART DIRECTOR:** ROBI CHATTOPADHYAYA **EDITOR:** RAMESH JOSHI **SCREENPLAY:** RITWIK GHATAK **MUSIC:** ALI AKBAR KHAN **CAST:** KALI BANNERJEE, KAJAL GUPTA, SHRIMAN DEEPAK, GYANESH MUKHERJEE, KESHTO MUKHERJEE, GANGAPADA BASU, SATINDRA BHATTACHARYA, TULSI CHAKRABORTY, JHURNI, ANIL CHATTERJEE, SEETA MUKHERJEE.



'One of the few truly original talents in the cinema this country has produced' was how Satyajit Ray described his contemporary, Ritwik Ghatak. *Ajantrik* was Ghatak's first released feature, based on a short narrative by the Bengali writer Subodh Ghosh. The film proposes 'an emotional integration with the machine age' through the story of an eccentric taxi-driver named Bimal and his battered old Chevrolet, whom he calls Jagaddal. The wheezing, honking, rattling car has a mind of its own, and Bimal too treats it as a human being, offering both praise and punishment. The film explores the comical and philosophical aspects of this strange bond between man and machine, as Bimal plies his trade in small-town Bihar and the regions of the Oraon tribe. Through their adventures, we realize that Jagaddal's days are numbered. Bimal spends all his money trying to fix the car, but it breaks down irretrievably, and is eventually dismantled to be sold as scrap. A final scene suggests a continuation of the cycle of life for this most animate of inanimate objects.

## Freedom from Fetishes

KUMAR SHAHANI ON RITWIK GHATAK'S *AJANTRIK*

A refugee of India's Partition, Ritwik Ghatak first thought of *Ajantrik* when the fledgling nation had been pulled apart into warring states repressing their own varied people, impoverishing themselves through repeated crises of identity.

The original inhabitants of India live along its central forests and have been truly independent of any colonization. Ghatak had lived amongst the Oraons at the eastern end of these forests, where perhaps the plough was first perfected. The inhabitants of Central India have always had access to the finest iron ore in the world, from which other

people have made weapons and machines that speed up organic tasks to lethal limits.

But Ghatak knew that the Oraons—and even those who lived on the periphery of their cosmos, such as himself—could counterpoint the violent waves of civilizational upheavals through collective compassion, born of eros and its epistemes. Dance, movement and fluttering banners are forms that have grown from mere fetishes of individuals to *alankaras*, or figures of speech and music. They in turn can yield the abstractions to approximate signs.

The notations, then, can create realizations of



science and art, narrative beyond chronologies.

That is how Ritwik Ghatak arrived at the bizarre structure—if it be so called—of *Pathetic Fallacy*. Imagine giving a film a title as historically abstract as that! Literally, the title *Ajantrik* extends the word *jantrik* (mechanical) to suggest its antithesis.

We have seen the end of the era that hegemonized the mechanical over the organic and the self-transformative. In this film of episodes that leads to multivalent interpretations, having no end or targeted object as it were, Ghatak wants to restore to us the signs that the Oraons and others like them (spread all over the earth) sought to find in their experience. Not through projective identification but rather through an interjection that renews desire. To give life, not to annihilate it. To make of everything an ornament, not to appropriate it or rob it of its divinity and its innocence.

No wonder the barefoot bride is at its centre. The lines of the song '*Your dancing you may offer / at the foot of the dark rain clouds*' may be taken to mean: *Let the earth drink deep, let her be fruitful and nourish her children*.

As Ghatak writes, 'The young woman standing shyly in a corner gets into a trance slowly. The rhythm intoxicates the blood in her veins, it is irresistible—waves of rhythm start rippling on her swaying body and imperceptibly she is in the midst of a high tempo. The birth of a dance among Oraons... once seen, it is never forgotten'.

It seems to me that the movement of dance frees the fetish from its otherworldly awe, making us both ecstatic and attentive. The fresh tribal air that wafts through the film gives us a promise of primeval freedom, from enclosing ourselves in any garb of stitched habit.

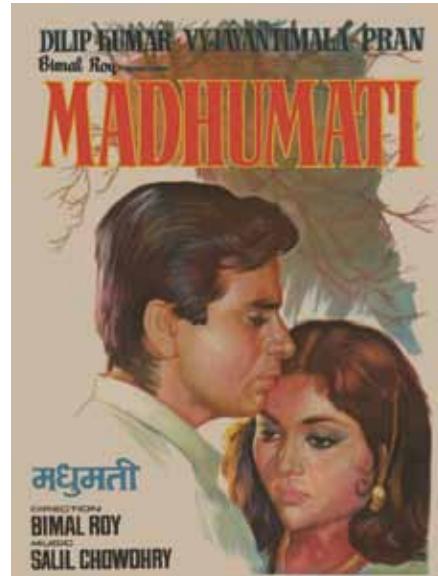
The magical can never be levelled down to a linear narrative with a beginning, middle and end. It is 'episodic', iterative, moves in curves and spirals that seem to open up and impel expression, contain and liberate from its grasp inner feeling, the secret of energy, desire, of ornament forever being stolen from the divine bride.

*Kumar Shahani is a noted filmmaker known for films like Maya Darpan (1972), Tarang (1984), Khayal Gatha (1988) and Kasba (1990).*

## Madhumati

INDIA, 1958  
 DIRECTOR: BIMAL ROY  
 149 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
 SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** BIMAL ROY **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** BIMAL ROY PRODUCTIONS **CAMERA:** DILIP GUPTA **ART DIRECTOR:** SUDHENDU ROY **EDITOR:** HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE **STORY:** RITWIK GHATAK **IALOGUE:** RAJINDER SINGH BEDI **LYRICS:** SHAILENDRA **MUSIC:** SALIL CHOUDHURY **CAST:** DILIP KUMAR, VYJANTIMALA, JOHNNY WALKER, PRAN, JAYANT, TIWARI, MISHRA, BAIJ SHARMA, BHUDO ADVANI, JAGDISH, SAGR, RANJIT SOOD, SHEOJIBHAI, TARUN BOSE.



*Madhumati* was Bimal Roy's biggest commercial success, a rare genre film from a director known for his realism and his socialist approach to cinema. Its romantic tale of reincarnation, ornamented with haunting songs and atmospheric visuals, was influential in establishing a sub-genre of Hindi cinema. The film tells the story of an engineer who takes shelter at an ancient mansion one night, only to realize he has been there in a previous life. He recalls a previous life when he worked for the lord of the mansion, and fell in love with the beautiful tribal maiden Madhumati. Their romance, however, ended tragically, when the libidinous Raja forced his attentions on Madhumati, and she died in an attempt to escape his clutches. The plot thickens when Madhumati's grieving lover encounters a young woman who is her double, and conspires with her to trap the evil Raja.

## A Creature of the Mist

RAJESH DEVRAJ ON BIMAL ROY'S *MADHUMATI*

The opening scenes of *Madhumati* follow the codes of the Gothic suspense/horror film quite dutifully. Here is the haunted mansion on a dark and stormy night; here the front door, mysteriously creaking open on its own. And here, on cue, comes the ancient caretaker, holding aloft his lantern. In no time, however, the mystery of the door is shrugged aside, as the caretaker casually explains how it was opened. It becomes apparent, at the very outset, that Bimal Roy is not interested in playing by the rules of the game.

As it turns out, this matter-of-fact realism is a red herring of sorts, for the film's denouement is rooted firmly in the supernatural. *Madhumati's* striking

achievement lies in transcending the conventions of the Gothic genre to bring in a wholly Indian belief in reincarnation and rebirth, as well as elements drawn from folk and tribal lore. Kamal Amrohi's *Mahe* (1948) was perhaps the first significant film to explore this territory, but *Madhumati* goes further in placing the genre—call it Indian Gothic—with the hybrid tradition of Hindi cinema, complete with melodrama, leering villainy, folksy humour and intermittent song-and-dance sequences. These popular elements can deflect attention from the pleasures of the film's narrative, which provides several satisfying twists and turns, besides taking some intriguing risks—there is a positive infestation of doppelgangers, for



instance, from Madhumati the tribal maiden to her ghostly apparition, her look-alike Madhavi, and her reincarnation, Radha.

It is Bimal Roy's skill as a filmmaker that keeps all these juggling balls in the air. An acclaimed master of social realism, he also succeeds in delineating the hierarchies of Madhumati's world quite precisely. We observe the representatives of an oppressive feudal system, the hill people it has dispossessed in its greed, and the urban educated class, represented by Anand, which sympathizes with one side, but must serve the other. You could imagine these very layers in today's India: while you would probably need to substitute a mining corporation for the feudal aristocracy, Madhumati's helplessness and Anand's impotence would remain the same. The tragic fate of the film's heroine is indeed 'an allegory for India's indigent tribal population' (as Jyotika Virdi describes it). Her revenge—the revenge of the land against its exploiters—is necessarily outside the realm of the real.

*Madhumati's* story was written by the Bengali director Ritwik Ghatak, whose own contemporaneous work reveals an almost ethnographic fascination for the world of the Indian tribal: one speculates

how he would have presented the heroine, had he directed the film. As for Bimal Roy's *Madhumati*, she is something of a familiar archetype: an innocent who personifies nature itself, like Kalidasa's Shakuntala, like numerous other nymphs from Indian literature and cinema. This worn-out abstraction can become something startlingly immediate in Roy's hands, as when Anand reaches forward to touch Madhumati, and the filmmaker cuts to a shot of running water. Throughout the film, one senses a search for the truth of Madhumati's elusive, protean nature, evoked most sublimely in the sequence where Anand follows her fugitive figure into the mist, drawn on by the music of her anklets. Roy transforms their hide-and-seek into a dance, as the background score brims over with liquid notes, quicksilver runs of sitar and sarangi and flute. At this level, the film suggests that we are witnessing an eternal game of desire and yearning, stretching across centuries and lives. As always in Hindi cinema, it is the lyric writer who grasps its mystical essence: *Main nadiya phir bhi main pyaasi / Bhed ye gehra, baat zara si*. I am a river, yet I am thirsty / Simple words, but a deep mystery.

Rajesh Devraj is a screenwriter and the co-author of *The Art of Bollywood*.

## Kaagaz ke Phool

aka *Paper Flowers*

INDIA, 1959  
DIRECTOR: GURU DUTT  
144 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**PRODUCER:** GURU DUTT **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** GURU DUTT FILMS  
**CAMERA:** V. K. MURTHY **ART DIRECTOR:** M. R. ACHREKAR **EDITOR:** Y. G. CHAWHAN **SCREENPLAY & DIALOGUE:** ABRAR ALVI **LYRICS:** KAIFI AZMI  
**MUSIC:** S. D. BURMAN **CAST:** GURU DUTT, WAHEEDA REHMAN, BABY NAAZ, JOHNNY WALKER, MAHESH KAUL, VEENA, MINOO MUMTAZ, NILOUFER, SULOCHANA DEVI, SHEILA VAZ, BIKRAM KAPOOR, MEHMOD, MOHAN CHOTI, TUN TUN, PRATIMA DEVI.



A dark, brooding masterpiece, Guru Dutt's *Kaagaz ke Phool* explores the make-believe world of the movies. Quasi-autobiographical in nature, it portrays the life and times of a filmmaker, depicting failure, oblivion and death as the inevitable outcomes of his journey. The theme proved to be somewhat prescient, since *Kaagaz ke Phool* was a commercial failure, and Guru Dutt never put his name to a film again, hurtling into a state of depression which led ultimately to his tragic suicide in 1964. The plot concerns Suresh Sinha, a famous film director whose marriage is on the rocks. His wife and her family look down upon the movie business, and he is forbidden from seeing his daughter. When Suresh grooms a young woman named Shanti to fame and stardom, there is much gossip about their love affair, which troubles Suresh's daughter. For her sake, Shanti withdraws from films, leaving Suresh a lonely man. His fortunes begin to decline and he takes to drink, losing his grip on himself. As his circumstances deteriorate over the years, he is reduced to playing bit roles. The studio forces Shanti to return to the movies, but by then it is too late for Suresh Sinha: he dies in a director's chair, a sad, forgotten man.

## The Realm of Shadows

ARUN KHOPKAR ON GURU DUTT'S *KAAGAZ KE PHOOL*

Guru Dutt, who died in 1964 at the age of thirty-nine, is today recognised as one of the masters of the world cinema, and as a creator of haunting images on the big screen.

Many historians and critics see the film song, the sine qua non of the Indian cinema, as a deviation from a realistic idiom or as a concession to the box-office. But some of the greatest Indian directors have been able to lift the song to great lyrical heights and dramatic intensity. Guru Dutt was certainly a leading

exponent of the form. Throughout his short but dazzling career, he used the form of melodrama in its pristine sense—a combination of melody and drama. He moved with great ease from the spoken word of the dialogue to the measured words of the lyric, merging them seamlessly with the help of skilful editing.

*Kaagaz ke Phool* provides several examples of his mastery. In the first ten minutes of the film, intensely powerful images move smoothly into a flashback.



Preferring powerful montage to a straightforward narrative, Guru Dutt creates a daring sequence, stunning in its beauty and lyricism. The vast spaces of a film studio—with its lights, its dark corners, its high ceilings, catwalks, cranes and trolleys, all engulfed in complex patterns of light and shadow—are stretched to their expressive limits by the Cinemascope format of the film.

*Kaagaz ke Phool* was the first Indian film made in Cinemascope. The format was invented to challenge the onslaught of television, which was robbing cinema of its audiences. Its exceptional width initially offered possibilities of a grand spectacular cinema. But after the novelty of the format wore out, the result was frames with ugly compositions strung out like clotheslines. Guru Dutt, however, was a seer of cinema who realized the potential of Cinemascope for his self-reflexive film about the film industry and the struggle of an artist to retain his own creativity. He used the format to express the loneliness of a man surrounded by vast spaces mute to his suffering. This was in 1959, a year before the masters of European

cinema explored the artistic (as against the merely spectacular) potential of Cinemascope with films such as *L'Avventura* (1960), *La Dolce Vita* (1960) and *8 ½* (1962).

Guru Dutt's lensing, especially his favourite close-up lens, allowed him a great economy of resources. With this lens, he etched many memorable close-ups of the Indian screen. He used lighting to pick up the glint in an eye and the flicker of a facial muscle, making them speak with rare eloquence and grace. He and his cameraman V. K. Murthy created brooding, introverted images with rich velvety blacks, casting a mood of foreboding and gloom. The world they take you into is oneiric, with its own laws of light and shade.

Guru Dutt's world is the Realm of Shadows. It has continued to attract connoisseurs, historians and critics of cinema for over half a century, drawing them to find new meanings and shades of expression in its exquisite fabric.

Arundhati Roy is a filmmaker and scholar. She is the author of *Guru Dutt: A Tragedy in Three Acts*.

# Indian Newsreels of the Fifties

RAJESH DEVRAJ

*The Golden Fifties: India's Endangered Classics* includes eight newsreels, produced by Films Division, that are being screened for the first time outside India. Set up in 1948, the state-run Films Division had a mandate from the government of India to produce and distribute documentaries, short films and newsreels. It was one of the largest such bodies in the world, thanks in no small part to a government ruling which made screening of its films compulsory for every theatre in the country.

In the fifties, every Indian viewer was familiar with Films Division's *Indian News Review*, which provided regular bulletins on the state of the nation. The newsreels showed history in the making: the departure of Lord Mountbatten, the heroes who climbed Everest, the Dalai Lama's arrival in India. They advertised the Nehruvian promise of a new dawn: great dams and bridges under construction, gleaming new tanks and fighter planes, happy feathered tribals dancing for the love of the state. The India of these films was not always a better India than the one you saw outside your window, for the newsreels reported on train crashes, ravaging floods and other third-world disasters as well. In those insular times, they also provided the only window on the world for millions, with glimpses of synchronized swimmers and dog shows and other such intriguing novelties.

In the cinema halls of the fifties, Films Division newsreels were projected before the feature film of the day, and that is how they are being shown in this programme. Their preoccupations may create interesting contrasts for the viewer—state propaganda providing a frame for the reality depicted in *Do Bigha Zameen*, for instance—or illuminate a film's themes in more indirect ways. A few of them will provide glimpses of the film industry that created the main attractions, while others may simply represent the drab reality from which glamorous Bollywood provided an escape. And of course, one is free to view these reels independently for what they are: time capsules from an extraordinary past, India's golden fifties.

*Newsreels will be shown in 35mm film prints specially struck for the programme.*

## Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference

INDIA, PRODUCTION YEAR UNKNOWN

7 MIN 35 SEC. B&W; HINDI

SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

A report on Mahatma Gandhi's visit to the Round Table Conference and his return to India, compiled at an unspecified date from footage shot in 1931.

Scenes include Gandhi visiting factories in Manchester; meeting Charlie Chaplin; meeting King George V at Birmingham Palace with Sarojini Naidu; meeting delegates to the Conference; returning to

Bombay and being received by politicians, activists and the general public; meeting followers at Mani Bhavan; attending a rally at Azad Maidan with other leaders; returning to Wardha ashram.

## Indian News Review No. 5

INDIA, 1948. 9 MIN 40 SEC. B&W; HINDI

SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

The last British governor-general leaves India, and the first Indian in the position takes over.

Scenes include Lord Mountbatten's departure from

India; a state banquet in his honour; the arrival of the first Indian governor-general C. Rajagopalachari at Palam Aerodrome in Delhi; Lord Mountbatten receiving the Indian governor-general at the Viceregal House; Lord Mountbatten leaving in a state coach for Palam Aerodrome; his departure from Palam Aerodrome; the swearing-in ceremony of the first Indian governor-general

## Indian News Review No. 172

INDIA, 1952. 9 MIN. B&W; ENGLISH

SUBTITLES: ITALIAN

**Film Festival:** Scenes from the first International Film Festival of India, including the inauguration at New Empire Cinema; a dinner and dance for the delegates; the arrival of the Chinese delegates; Frank Capra holding a press conference; an exhibition of film equipment; a programme of music and dance at the Indian National Theatre.

**Republic Day:** The President of India takes the salute at a parade in Delhi.

**Election Front:** Voting in Calcutta, Tanjore district, and among the tribals of Chitrakut, Madhya Pradesh.

**News Flashes:** The Thyagaraja Festival on the banks of the Cauvery; the 56th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; a demonstration of fire-proof paint in Bombay; tragedy strikes the I.N.S. Delhi

**Foreign News:** A dog show in Dusseldorf; aquatic stars at a swim meet in Florida.

## Indian News Review No. 246

INDIA, 1953. 8 MIN 50 SECS. B&W

SOUNDTRACK NOT AVAILABLE

**Everest Heroes Honoured:** Sherpa Tensing, Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir John Hunt return to Kathmandu; crowds welcome the heroes; a civic

reception in Calcutta.

**News Flashes:** Prime Minister Nehru returns to Delhi; the National Cadet Corps' work in Ranchi, Bihar; the Cine Technicians' Conference in Calcutta; a football match between the West German club Offenbach Kickers and Mohun Bagan in Calcutta.

**Fairs and Festivals:** Id in Kashmir; a summer festival in Simla; the Machhindranath Rath Yatra in Kathmandu.

**Foreign News:** Queen Elizabeth sees the Trooping of the Colours; an Indian art exhibition in San Francisco.

## Indian News Review No. 297

INDIA, 1954. 9 MINUTES. B&W; ENGLISH

SUBTITLES: ITALIAN

**Sampatidan:** Jai Prakash Narayan urges members of the Bombay Stock Exchange to donate their wealth to the poor.

**Mr Nehru Visits Project Centres:** Community centres in rural Delhi.

**News Flashes:** A vaccination drive against tuberculosis; the Anath Vidyarthi Griha, a school for poor students; the passing-out parade at the National Defence Academy, Dehra Dun.

**U.N. President Goes Abroad:** Vijayalakshmi Pandit leaves on a goodwill tour of Yugoslavia and the U.K.

**Dilwara Temples Under Repairs:** Craftsmen repair carvings in Mount Abu.

**Danny Kaye in Delhi:** American entertainer shoots a film in aid of UNICEF.

**Foreign News:** A new speed record for sled rockets; an archaeological discovery in Egypt; Bucky the chimp goes to a dentist

## Indian News Review No. 550

INDIA, 1959 9 MINS. B&W; HINDI  
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH, ITALIAN

**Dalai Lama in India:** The Tibetan leader arrives in India after a fifteen-day trek from Lhasa.

**News Flashes:** The President lays the foundation stone for Ravindra Bhavan; a convocation at a Gurukul university; tourism in Kashmir; jute exports; tetrapods protect Bombay's Marine Drive; Prohibition week in Bombay.

**Sarvodaya Ashram:** A Gandhian institution contributes to the building of a Welfare State.

**World Health Day:** Events focussed on the theme of Mental Health.

**Gallantry Awards:** The nation honours its brave soldiers at an investiture ceremony in New Delhi.

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## Bhartiya Samachar Chitra

aka *Indian News Review No. 767*  
INDIA, 1963. 10 MINS 26 SECS. B&W; ENGLISH  
SUBTITLES: ITALIAN

**Dumraon Rail Collision:** A train accident in Bihar.

**Hungarian Equipment for Textile Research:** A textile laboratory presented by Hungary.

**Bridge across Brahmaputra:** A bridge comes up over a river in Assam.

**News Flashes:** The Soviet Deputy Prime Minister in Delhi; a new direct trunk telephone service between Delhi and Agra; the deaths of Bengal's Home Minister and the actor M. V. Subbiah Naidu.

**Prisoners Help the Blind:** Inmates at the Sabarmati Jail prepare books for the blind.

**Girls Polytechnic in Hyderabad:** Female students learn technical subjects at a polytechnic.

**Sports Stadium for Gauhati:** A tussle between the executive and the judiciary at a new sports stadium.

**The Latest in Aviation:** Britain's new Hawker P 1127 strike fighter.

**Shape of Things to Come:** A Hollywood home constructed out of plastic; an automated vending machine in Rotterdam.

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## Bhartiya Samachar Chitra

aka *Indian News Review No. 767*  
INDIA, 1963. 10 MINS 26 SECS. B&W; ENGLISH  
SUBTITLES: ITALIAN

**President Tours U.S.A.:** President Radhakrishnan at Arlington National Cemetery; a visit to Disneyland with Walt Disney; the President receives an honorary degree at Pennsylvania University.

**Image of Indian Cinema:** An exhibition on Indian cinema's golden jubilee in Bombay.

**Voice of Africa:** African leaders pledge to wipe out colonialism; a vision for a united Africa.

**Self-Government in Kenya:** Kenya's first Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta wins a nation-wide election.

**Cyclone Hits East Pakistan:** Widespread destruction in the coastal districts; India rushes aid.

**Pope John XXIII:** Romans mourn the death of their Pope.

**Army Chief in Nepal:** General J. N. Chaudhuri visits the kingdom of Nepal.

**Sports Highlights:** A table-tennis tournament in Calcutta.

**President Arrives in Britain:** Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip welcome the Indian President on his first state visit.

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GIANLUCA FARINELLI, CECILIA CENCIARELLI, GUY BORLEE,  
MARCELLA NATALE, ANDREA PERARO, DAVIDE POZZI, ELENA  
TAMMACCARO, VALERIA BIGONGIALI AND SILVIA FESSIA.

LORENZO CODELLI FOR ALL HIS SUPPORT



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## A Singular Cinematic Legacy

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India in the 1950s was a country newly born, freed from the shackles of colonialism. The cities beckoned with dreams of opportunity, but also revealed the grim reality of slums, crime and exploitation. This age saw the birth of a new breed of filmmakers who turned their backs on mythology and historical dramas to probe their own tumultuous times. Their narratives, rich in social commentary, made the 1950s the most glorious chapter in the history of Indian cinema—truly its Golden Age.